

## Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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O 261413Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6752

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 9607

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI CARGO THROUGH SUEZ CANAL

REF: SECTO 13022; CAIRO 9541

SUMMARY: DISCUSSED ISRAELI CARGO ISSUE WITH FAHMY EVENING OF SEPT 25 IN TERMS INDICATED REFTEL. FAHMY'S INITIAL RESPONSE WAS TO POINT TO CONTINUING AREA FUROR ABOUT DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND RESULTATNT ATTACKS ON SADAT. WHILE REITERATING GOE'S INTENTION TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENT, HE REPEATED PREVIOUS ARGUMENT THAT MATTER IS ONE OF TIMING AND ISRAELIS HAVE NO URGENT NNED TO SEND CARGO THROUGH NOW. HE RECALLED SADAT'S INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT TWO MONTHS. WHEN ADVISED THAT THIS WAS NOT SOON ENOUGH AND PRESSED FOR AN EARLIER DATE, AROUND OCT 15, FAHMY FIRST SUGGESTED OCT 25, BUT THEN MOVED IT UP TO OCT 22, I.E. A WEEK BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE FOR THE US. HE THOUGHT HE COULD PERSUADE THE PRESIDENT TO GO ALONG. HOWEVER, IF WE WISH THE PRESIDENT'S CONFIRMATION, IT WILL TAKE SEVERAL DAYS TO SOUND OUT THE PRESIDENT. IF LATTER'S REACTION IS ADAMANTLY NEGATIVE, HE WOULD LET US KNOW. I OFFERED DISCUSS MATTER WITH SADAT. FAHMY SAID I WAS FREE TO DO SO, BUT WE MIGHT BE INVITING A TURNDOWN IF WE RAISE MATTER WITH HIM NOW. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR REACTION TO PROPOSED OCT 22 DATE AND WHETHER FAHMY OR I

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SHOULD DISCUSS IT DIRECTLY WITH THE PRESIDENT OR ACCEPT

FAHMY'S JUDGMENT THAT HE CAN AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME GET  
SADAT TO GO ALONG. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING A TELEPHONE CALL FROM FAHMY LATE YESTERDAY  
AFTERNOON TO COME TO SEE HIM AT 2000 AT HIS HOME, I HAD  
AN HOUR'S MEETING WITH HIM TO DISCUSS REFERENCE SUBJECT.  
I SUBSEQUENTLY HAD TO ATTEND LONG AIRPORT MOURNING  
SERVICES FOR DECEASED INDIAN AMBASSADOR (WHO DIED  
SUDDENLY EARLY YESTERDAY MORNING), WHICH DID NOT CONCLUDE  
UNTIL 0430 THIS MORNING WHEN AIR INDIA FINALLY ARRIVED  
TO PICK UP THE BODY. HENCE, I HAVE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL  
THIS MORNING TO SEND YOU A REPORT ON MY TALK.

2. MY PRESENTATION FOLLOWED CLOSELY POINTS  
SUGGESTED REFTEL. I TOLD FAHMY OBEOUR PLEASURE AT THE  
SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE GENEVA WORKING GROUP TALKS  
AND OUR RECOGNITION OF THE TOUGH DECISIONS THEY INVOLVED  
FOR EGYPTIANS, WHO SHOWED GREAT FOREBEARNACE AND  
BUSINESSLIKE APPROACH. WE BELIEVE OUR OWN INTERVENTIONS  
WITH THE ISRAELIS WERE HELPFUL IN INDUCING GREATER  
FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR POSITIONS, AND I WAS SURE THAT THE  
EGYPTIANS HAD NOTED THE CHANGES IN THE ISRAELI APPROACH  
AS A RESULT OF OUR EFFORTS. FAHMY READILY ACKNOWLEDGED  
THIS WAS SO.

3. AS HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SUGGESTED WE DO ON SENSITIVE  
MATTERS, I WAS NOW COMING TO HIM FOR EGYTIAN UNDERSTANDING  
AND HELP ON THE MATTER OF ISRAELI CARGOES. UP TO NOW WE  
HAVE SUCCEEDED WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY IN CONTAINING ISRAELI  
EFFORTS TO INSIST UPON IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
EGYPT'S INDERTAKING TO ALLOW ISRAELI NON-MILITARY  
CARGOES TO PASS THROUGH THE CANAL. ON A NUMBER OF  
OCCASIONS WE HAVE KEPT THE ISRAELIS FROM TRYING TO FREEZE  
EVERYTHING UNTIL THIS HAD HAPPENDED. ISSUE STILL FESTERS,  
HOWEVER IN BOTH ISRAEL AND US-ISRAELI RELATIONS. IF NOT  
EXPEDITIOUSLY RESOLVED, IT COULD BECOME A POLITICAL ISSUE  
AND JEOPARDIZE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE. EQUALLY SERIOUS,  
IT COULD QUICKLY BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE US, WHERE IT COULD  
BE SEIZED UPON BY CRITICS AND OPPONENTS OF THE RECENT  
AGREEMENT. IN THAT CASE, BOTH USG AND GOE WOULD BE  
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VULNERABLE SINCE THE NON-MILITARY CARGO TRANSIT PROVISION  
IS NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PUBLISHED AGREEMENT  
AND ITS OBSERVANCE WILL BE VIEWED AS A TEST OF THE VIABILITY  
OF THAT AGREEMENT. I RECALLED WE HAD PREVIOUSLY TOLD  
ISRAELIS, ON BASIS OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S ASSURANCES,  
THAT A SHIP WITH ISRAELI CARGO COULD TRANSIT PRIOR TO THE  
KNESSET DEBATE ON THE AGREEMENT. THIS DID NOT HAPPEN.  
THE GOOD FAITH OF THE US AND CONFIDENCE IN OUR ROLE IS

AT STAKE.

4. I ASSURED FAHMY WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE UNJUSTIFIED CRITICISM TO WHICH PRESIDENT SADAT AND FAHMY ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO ON THE AGREEMENT AND FIND IT PAINFUL TO HAVE TO RAISE THE MATTER WITH OUR EGYPTIAN FRIENDS. I HAD TO TELL HIM, HOWEVER, THAT YOUR BEST JUDGEMENT, AS A FRIEND, IS THAT THIS ISSUE IS SO SERIOUS THAT, UNLESS SOON RESOLVED, IT COULD REVERSE THE PROCESS. WE ARE NOT EXAGGERATING WHEN WE SAY THIS. WE THEREFORE URGE THE PRESIDENT AND FAHMY TO RECONSIDER THEIR PREVIOUS POSITION.

5. TO MINIMIZE EMBARRASSMENT FOR EGYPT, WE HAVE SUCCEEDED WITH GREAT EFFORT IN OBTAINING ISRAELI AGREEMENT TO A PROCEDURE WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE CONCERNS OF BOTH SIDES AND OFFERS THE BEST CHANCES OF KEEPING THE ISSUE FROM BLOWING UP. SPECIFICALLY, IF GOE COULD GIVE US BEFORE COMPLETION OF US CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON US PROPOSAL AND ISRAELI SIGNING OF THE GENEVA PROTOCOL A FIRM DATE FOR THE PASSAGE OF SUCH AN ISRAELI CARGO -- A DATE, SAY, WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER ISRAELI SIGNING -- THIS WOULD HELP. CONGRESS IS NOT LIKELY TO COMPLETE WORK ON US PROPOSAL BEFORE OCT. 2. THUS, A DATE AROUND OCT 15 OR THE DAY FAHMY HAD INITIALLY PROPOSED WOULD BE HELPFUL. THIS

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6753

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CAIRO 9607

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

WOULD BE ABOUT ONE MONTH AFTER THE TIME WHEN, BASED ON WHAT EGYPTIANS HAD ORIGINALLY TOLD US, A CARGO COULD PASS.

6. FAHMY TOOK MY DEMARCH VERY WELL. HE SAID HE WISHED TO SPEAK TO ME CANDIDLY AND WITHOUT PULLING ANY PUNCHES. HE THEN GAVE A LONG DISQUISITION ON HOW SADAT CONTINUE TO BE UNDER ATTACK BY SYRIANS, PALESTINIANS AND OTHERS. THE "SILENT MAJORITY," E.G. SAUDI ARABIA AND VARIOUS OTHER FIRENDLY ARAB STATES, ARE DOING LITTLE TO HELP. INSIDE EGYPT THERE ARE ALSO RUMBLINGS ABOUT THE AGREEMENT. IN PAST FEW DAYS LEFTIST AND NASSERIST STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AT AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY HAVE CONDUCTED PROTEST MEETINGS. FORMER "RCC MEMBER" KAMEL RIFA'AT HAD ALSO PUBLICLY DENOUNCED SADAT AND THE AGREEMENT IN THAT FORUM. POLICE ACTION HAD TO BE TAKEN TO BREAK IT UP. LEFTSITS AND NASSERITES ARE TRYING TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH RIGHT-WING MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ELEMENTS TO OPPOSE SADAT AND AGREEMENT. GOE EXPECTS STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WHEN UNIVERSITIES REOPEN IN MID-OCTOBER. GOE CAN HANDLE THIS, BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO FLAUNT SENSITIVE ISSUE SUCH AS ISARELI CARGOES.

7. THE ISRAELIS, FAHMY RECALLED, HAD INSISTED UPON PUTTING THE CARGO TRANSIT PROVISIO INTO THE AGREEMENT. THE ISRAELIS HAVE NOT YET SIGNED THE PROTOCOL AND INSIST THE AGREEMENT IS NOT IN FORCE UNTIL THEY DO SIGN. WHY IS SECRET

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IT SO IMPORTANT, FAHMY PLEADED, TO MAKE THIS AN ISSUE NOW WHEN SADAT IS UNDER SUCH SEVER ATTACK? CARGO TRANSIT IS NOT VITAL TO THE ISRAELIS AND NEVER HAS BEEN. AS HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SAID, GOE WILL HONOR ITS OBLIGATIONS, BUT NEED TIME TO DO SO. MOREOVER, AN ISRAELI CARGO NOW MIGHT EVEN PROMPT A PALESTINIAN SABOTAGE OPERATION AGAINST IT. SADAT'S LAST INSTRUCTIONS WERE IN TWO MONTHS TIME. HAD WE NOT TALKED TO THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THIS AFTER OUR PREVIOUS DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT?

8. I TOLD HIM THAT WE HAD DONE SO, AS I HAD JUST RELATED, AND HAD WITH SOME DIFFICULTY SUCCEEDED IN DELAYING THINGS. HOWEVER, THE ISSUE HAS COME UP AGAIN AND IS ONE THAT HAS TO BE FACED. IT IS NOT ONLY OF INTEREST IN ISRAELI BUT IN THE US AS WELL. I THEN REHEARSED AGAIN MANY OF THE POINTS WHICH I HAD ALREADY PUT TO HIM. IN THE SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS AND COOPERATION THAT CHARACTERIZES OUR RELATIONS, I SAID WE URGED THE MATTER BE RECONSIDERED. SINCE I WAS AWARE THAT FAHMY HAD PRESIDENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS, I ALSO SUGGESTED IT MIGHT BE USEFUL IF I WENT TO THE PRESIDENT TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT NOT ONLY FAHMY, BUT THE PRESIDENT AS WELL, APPRECIATE THE URGENCY OF FINDING AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM BEFORE IT GETS OUT

OF HAND.

9. FAHMY SAID HE UNDERSTOOD. HE FIRST SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS AN OCTOBER 25 DATE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. I SAID THIS WAS TOO LATE AND RECALLED HE HAD EARLIER THOUGHT TWO WEEKS BEFORE PRESIDENT DEPARTS FOR THE US. THIS WOULD BE AROUND OCTOBER 15. FAHMY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IN HIS PERTINENT PAPER TO THE PRESIDENT, HE HAD ONLY SUGGESTED A WEEK BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE FOR US. WITH THIS OBVIOUSLY IN MIND, HE THEN PROPOSED OCTOBER 22. HE WOULD TAKE AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO SPEAK TO SADAT ABOUT IT AND THOUGHT THERE IS REASONABLE CHANCE THE PRESIDENT WILL IN THE LAST ANALYSIS AGREE. HOWEVER, AFTER AN INITIAL ISRAELI CARGO, THEY SHOULD LAY OFF FOR A MONTH OR TWO BEFORE SENDING CARGOES THROUGH REGULARLY. I WAS FREE TO DISCUSS IT WITH THE PRESIDENT IF I WISHED, BUT HE CAUTIONED ANY APPROACH TO SADAT NOW IS LIKELY TO ELICIT  
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A NEGATIVE ANSWER. THE PRESIDENT IS UPSET ABOUT REPORTS OF POSSIBLE PERSHING AND F-16 SALES TO ISRAEL. I REMINED HIM NO DECISION REACHED ON THESE ITEMS, BUT FAHMY SAID THE PRESIDENT DEPLORES THE PUBLICITY ABOUT THEM AT THIS DELICATE JUNCTURE.

10. I ASKED IF WE COULD INFORM THE CONGRESS AND THE ISRAELIS ABOUT HIS PROPOSED OCT 22 DATE. FAHMY WAS CONCERNED ON THIS SCORE. THEY WILL LEAK IT AND UP TO NOW THE IDEA IS SOLELY HIS. IF WE WISH PRESIDENTIAL CONFIRMATION, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE ABOUT THREE OR FOUR DAYS. HE WOULD TAKE IT UP WITH SADAT WHEN HE NEXT HAS A CHANCE TO TALK WITH THE PRESIDENT. THE PRESIDENT IS EXPECTED IN CAIRO ON SEPTEMBER 28 FOR A MAJOR ADDRESS. IF SADAT'S REACTION IS NEGATIVE, HE WOULD TELL US.

11. FAHMY EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE ISRAELI PENCHANT TO LEAK THIS INFORMATION. AT ONE POINT HE COMMENDTED THAT IF A SHIP CARRYING ISRAELI CARGO APPEARS AT THE CANAL AT ANY TIME, IT WILL BE LET THROUGH WITHOUT QUESTION. I ASKED IF THIS MIGHT BE THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THE MATTER. HE THOUGHT NOT BECAUSE SADAT WILL REACT THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE DELIBERATELY FLOUTING HIM, BUT STILL INSISTED SUCH A CARGO WOULD GO THROUGH. FAHMY ALSO SAID THAT IF KHADDAM TELLS YOU IN WASHINGTON THAT SYRIA IS READY TO BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAELIS AND THIS CAN BE ANNOUNCED, AN ISRAELI CARGO CAN GO THROUGH THE NEXT DAY.

12. FAHMY CAUTIONED ON ONE MATTER, HOWEVER. IF THERE IS ANY ISRAELI ABOARD THE SHIP OR ANY OTHER SHIP, THAT

PERSON WILL BE ARRESTED. GOE HAS NOT SAID IT WILL PERMIT  
ISRAELI PERSONNEL THROUGH THE CANAL. FAHMY THEN ALLUDED  
TO THE RECENT ABIE NATHAN INCIDENT. EGYPTIAN NAVY HAD BEEN  
INSTRUCTED NOT TO PERMIT NATHAN'S SHIP TO ENTER  
EGYPTIAN WATERS. NATHAN HAD TRIED TO DO SO. EGYPTIAN  
NAVY HAD EXCEEDED ITS INSTRUCTIONS AND BROUGHT HIM IN.  
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR POLICE HAD THEREUPON COMPOUNDED  
THE ERROR BY BRINGING HIM TO CAIRO AS A PRISONER. FROM  
CAIRO HE WAS SENT TO PARIS BY AIR, WHERE HE WANTED  
TO GO. THE PASSAGE OF ISRAELI NATIONALS THROUGH THE  
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CANAL, FAHMY REITERATED, IS A HIGHLY POLITICAL  
ISSUE. GOE IS NOT READY TO ALLOW IT. ISRAELIS SHOULD  
BE MADE AWARE OF THIS IF THEY ARE NOT ALREADY SO.

13. COMMENT: IN MY JUDGMENT, GIVEN THE PRESIDENT'S  
INSTRUCTIONS, FAHMY WAS BEING AS RESPONSIVE AS  
POSSIBLE. WE NOW HAVE THREE CHOICES, A) ACCEPT THE  
OCT 22 DATE BASED ON FAHMY'S JUDGMENT: B) ASK FAHMY  
TO CONFIRM THE OCT 22 DATE WITH SADAT, WHICH  
RUNS THE RISK THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL TURN IT DOWN; OR  
C) GO BACK TO FAHMY AND URGE AN EARLIER OCT 15 DATE. I  
COULD GO DIRECTLY TO SADAT, IF YOU WISH, TO MAKE OUR  
PRESENTATION, BUT RESULTS ARE LIKELY TO DEPEND UPON HOW  
PROFITABLE THE MOMENT IS. AFTER OUR PREVIOUS  
DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER (CAIRO 9197), FAHMY APPARENTLY ONLY  
SENT A PAPER TO THE PRESIDENT, WHICH THE LATTER ANNOTATED. IF  
FAHMY WERE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH SADAT, PEGGING IT ON MY DEMARCHE,

HE SHOULD HAVE A REASONABLE CHANCE OF BRINGING THE PRESIDENT  
AROUND TO AN OCT 22 DATE.

14. PLEASE ADVISE YOUR WISHES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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